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For J. Hudson

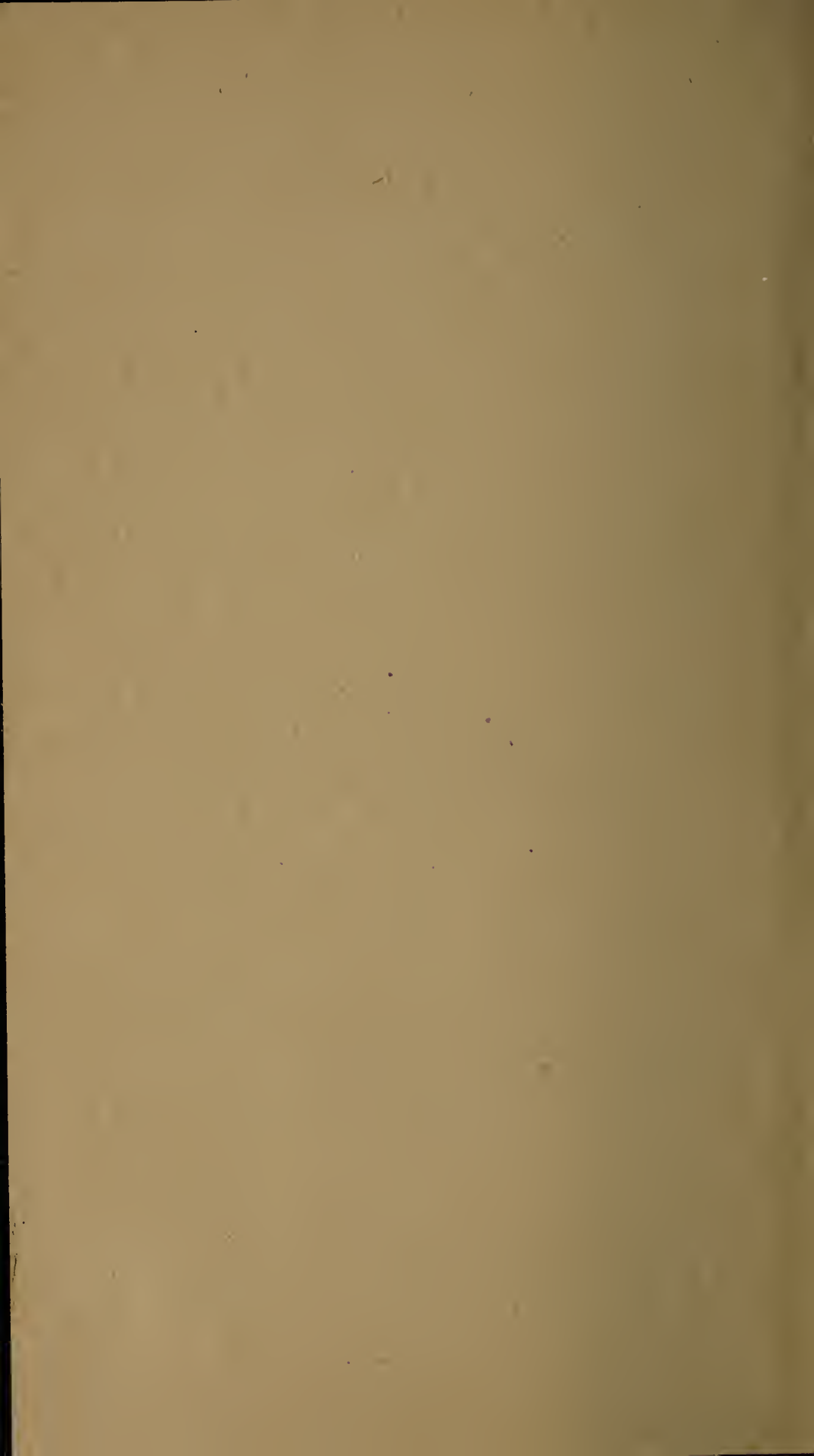
PUBLICITY SERIES NO. 3

Man's Invisible Bodies



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NATIONAL PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY
826 Oakdale Ave., Chicago.



Man's Invisible Bodies.

Man has within him undeveloped senses, by means of which he is able to appreciate matter much more finely subdivided than that which our ordinary senses enable us to grasp. The nature of those finer senses cannot be made clear until we have described the higher bodies of man. It is one of the difficulties of Theosophy that the whole of this system is so closely interrelated, and it all dovetails together so beautifully, that it is frequently impossible to explain fully any one part of it without touching upon nearly all the rest, and no one can tell how strong is the evidence for any one part of it until he thoroughly knows the whole of it.

Besides the matter which we can see about us, and besides the matter which we do not see, but of whose presence science assures us (the various gases and the ether, for example), there exist many other finer kinds of matter, which can only be seen by means of finer senses.

The Ether

There are whole worlds composed of these finer grades of matter which we call the higher planes of Nature. Remember that we are still speaking of the same matter which we all know; we recognize only one matter, though it may be in different conditions. We find that this ether of which science speaks is not a substance differing from all other substances, but rather a condition of matter; just as you have hydrogen in its normal gaseous condition, or under sufficient pressure and with the proper temperature you may have it liquefied, or even solidified, so we find that its condition may be changed in the opposite direction, and we may have it in a finer state, which we call the etheric. So that for us ether is not a separate substance, but a condition of any kind of substance, so that in that etheric condition we might have gold or silver, lithium or platinum, or any of the so-called elements.

How Occultism Studies Nature

Occultism approaches its problems from a different point of view than the scientist; instead of developing and improving its instruments, as modern science has been so wonderfully successful in doing, it goes to work to develop the observer. It develops within the man other and finer faculties by means of which he is able to perceive these exceedingly minute objects, and thus it penetrates further into the heart of Nature than any instrument can ever do. Do not imagine that there is anything supernatural or uncanny about these higher faculties; they are simply straightforward developments of powers which man already possesses, and will come to every one in due course, though some people have taken special trouble to develop them now in advance of the rest.

Matter Finer Than Physical

There are several subdivisions of matter and we speak of these stages as the planes of Nature, by which we mean simply divisions of matter according to its degree of density. All the matter which you know we should describe as that of the physical plane, including even the ether. Beyond that we come to another class—the same matter still, remember, only more finely subdivided, and we call this astral matter. We may carry on this process of subdivision and refining to another stage, and find another condition of matter higher still; and to that we have given the name of mental matter, because it is found that what is called the mind of man is composed of this type of matter. That sounds a startling statement, no doubt, but nevertheless it is a true one, based on definite experiment on scientific lines.

Still more of these subdivisions rise one above another, but for the present we will deal with no more than three—the physical, the astral and the mental. Do not be deceived by the use of that word “above.” Do not think for a moment of our investigation as passing away from the earth. To rise higher in this investigation means simply to withdraw more and more into the self. so as

to be able to sense finer and finer stages of matter, but all these stages are existing about us here and now and all the time, simply interpenetrating one another, just as the air or gas in aerated water interpenetrates the liquid. Just so, in and amongst all physical particles exist astral particles, and amongst the astral particles exist the mental in turn.

The Soul and the Body

Now, with that idea in view, let us turn to the constitution of man. Man is entirely wrong in supposing that he *has* a soul, but he would be quite right if he said that he *is* a soul.

There are hundreds of cases on record in which a man has gone away from his physical body in trance or under the influence of anaesthetics, or even in ordinary sleep; and it is found that under such circumstances, when he is far away from his physical being, with its grey matter and its chemical action, he can still think and observe and remember just as when he has his physical vehicle in use. It is therefore very evident that man is not the body, since he can exist apart from it; the body is only an instrument which he uses for his own purposes.

Man's Divine Origin

Our theory of man and of his origin is that he is essentially a spirit, a spark of the Divine Fire. That spark is individualized, marked off as it were, from the great ocean of the God-head by something which we may call a soul—or rather, when it is so individualized, we call it a soul. That which separates him we usually call the causal body, but we leave that aside for the present, and deal only with his lower vehicles, for that causal body is unchanging, except that it gradually evolves, whereas the mental, astral and physical are taken afresh for each incarnation.

The Method of Development, Gaining Experiences

Why should he take upon himself these various bodies? it may be asked. Because this is the

method of evolution appointed for him—that he shall gain experience through learning to respond to impacts from without. He takes on these lower bodies in order that he may be able to receive and respond to vibrations of stronger, coarser type than any which could be found on his own higher plane. For some students, this whole subject is most easily comprehended by considering it along this line of vibrations.

Think of it thus: Every impression which reaches us from without, no matter what it is, comes to us as a vibration. We see by means of the waves in the ether, we hear by means of waves in the air. What then is conveyed to us by vibrations of that finer type of matter of which we have been speaking, and how are we able to receive them? The answer is simple, but far-reaching. By their means we are able to perceive the higher part of our world, which is usually hidden from us, and we may learn to appreciate them by means of the finer matter which exists in us—through the senses of these finer bodies.

Changes in the Astral Body

The astral body is especially the vehicle of passion, emotion, and desire in man, so that when a sudden wave of some great emotion sweeps over a man, it shows itself by exceedingly violent vibrations of the astral matter. Suppose that with astral sight you were watching a man, and that man should unfortunately lose his temper. Instead of seeing the physical expression of annoyance, you would see a very remarkable change in his astral body. The whole vehicle would be pulsating with a violent vibration, and since color is only a certain rate of vibration, this sudden change would involve also a change in the color of the astral body as well. When we speak of the surging of passion, we are nearer the truth than we think. As the man cools down, his astral body will resume its usual color and appearance, yet a slight permanent trace is perceptible to the trained eye. The same thing is true of other emotions, good or bad. If a man feels a great rush of devotionable emotion, or of intense affec-

tion, each of these will at once manifest itself by its appropriate change in the astral body, and each would leave its slight permanent trace upon the man's character.

Changes in the Mental Body

When we come to deal with that other vehicle of still finer matter which we call the mental body, we find that that also vibrates, but in response to quite a different set of impressions. No emotion under any circumstances ought to affect it in the least, for this is not the home of the passions or emotions, but of thought. It is not a new idea to speak of vibration in connection with thought. All experiments in telepathy and thought transference depend upon this fact that every thought creates a vibration, and that this can be conveyed along a line of mental particles, and will excite a similar vibration in the mental body of another man. There may still be those who do not believe in telepathy, for it is hard to find the limits of human obstinacy; but this is a matter upon which any one may so easily convince himself that unbelief simply means indifference to the question.

Character Building

Here, then, are two of the bodies of man—the astral body, which is the vehicle of his sensations, passions and emotions, and the mental body, which is the medium of his thought. But each of these has its possibilities of development, for at each level there are various types of matter. A man may have a comparatively gross astral body, which answers very readily to low, undesirable vibrations, and be carefully working at it, and learning to control it, he may gradually change its composition very considerably; until it becomes capable of responding to waves of emotion of a much better type. In the mental body he may have a very fine type of mental matter, or a somewhat grosser mental matter; and upon that it will depend whether good and high thoughts come naturally and easily to him or the reverse. But this also is in his own power, for he can alter it if he will. And it is not only during his earth

life that this will make a great difference to him and to his evolution, but also in the life after death. When the man puts off his physical body he still retains these others, the astral and the mental, and upon their condition depends much of his happiness in the new world (which yet is part of the old one) in which he finds himself. Remember that these are matters, not of mere belief, but of experiment for many of us.

We May Visit the Dead in Sleep

We should realize that those whom we call the dead have not left us. We have been brought up in a complex belief which implies that every death is a separate and marvelous miracle, that when the soul leaves the body it somehow vanishes into a heaven beyond the stars—no suggestion being made as to the mechanical means of transit over the appalling spaces involved. Nature's processes are assuredly wonderful, and often to us incomprehensible; but they never fly in the face of reason and common sense. When you take off your overcoat in the hall, you do not suddenly vanish to some distant mountain-top; you are standing just where you were before, though you may present a different outward appearance. Precisely in the same way, when a man puts off his physical body he remains exactly where he was before. It is true that you no longer see him, but the reason for this is not that he has gone away, but that the body which he is now wearing is not visible to your physical eyes.

All this, if it interests you, you may find worked out in detail in Theosophical literature.

For the moment, all which concerns us is that by means of your physical body you can see and touch the physical world only, while by means of the "spiritual body" you can see and touch the things of the "spiritual" or inner world, and remember that this is in no sense *another* world, but simply a more refined part of *this* world. Once more I say, there *are* other worlds, but we are not concerned with them now. The man of whom you think as departed is in reality with you still. When you stand side by side, you in the physical body and he in the "spiritual" ve-

hicle, you are unconscious of his presence because you cannot see him, but when you leave your physical body in sleep you stand side by side with him in full and perfect consciousness, and your union with him is in every way as full as it used to be. So during sleep you are happy with him whom you love; it is only during waking hours that you feel the separation.

Unfortunately for most of us there is a break between the physical consciousness and the consciousness of the "spiritual" body, so that although in the latter we can perfectly remember the former, many of us find it impossible to bring through into waking life the memory of what the soul does when it is away from the body in sleep. If this memory were perfect, for us indeed there would be no death. But while as yet only a few possess full sight and full memory, there are many who have been able to feel the presence of their loved ones, even though they cannot see; and there are others who, though they have no definite memory, wake from slumber with a sense of peace and blessedness which is the result of what has happened in that higher world.

First-Hand Knowledge

Here then, is our theory, the result of our experiments, and in explaining it we are giving you the benefit of many years of toilsome work and study. Out of it has come a firm and definite adhesion to this glorious Theosophy, which has done so much for us, which we find to account for so many things which would otherwise be insoluble mysteries, which stands by us in times of trouble and difficulty, and explains so clearly and reasonably why the trouble and the difficulty come, and what they are going to do for us.

The Appeal to Reason

We are not seeking for converts in the ordinary sense of that word. We are in no way under the delusion from which so many estimable orthodox people suffer, that unless one believes as we do he will have a very sulphurous time hereafter. We know perfectly well that everyone

will attain the final goal of humanity, whether he now believes what we say, or whether he does not.

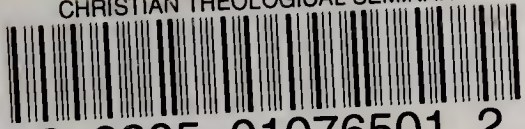
Knowledge Is Power

The progress of every man is absolutely certain; but he may make his road easy or he may make it difficult. If he goes on in ignorance, and seeks selfish ends in that ignorance, he is likely to find it very hard and painful. We have found this philosophy useful to us; we have found it helps us in difficulties, that it makes life easier to bear, and death easier to face, and so we wish to share our gospel with you. We ask no blind faith from you; we simply put this philosophy before you and ask you to study it, and we believe that if you do so you will find what we have found, rest and peace and help, and the power to be of use in the world.

Our Search for Truth

The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good will, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as a partial expression of the Divine Wisdom, and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watch-word, as Truth is their aim.

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